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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002464

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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: RULING PARTY CONVENTION DELAY - BUYING
TIME TO REFORM?

REF: A. ABUJA 2446

[1](#)B. ABUJA 2377

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b
& d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)
Assistant Director and Coordinator for Foreign Chapters Agape
Kramer (strictly protect) told Poloff senior PDP leadership,
including National Chairman Ahmadu Ali, are intent on
implementing the recommendations of the Alex Ekwueme-led
Reconciliation Committee. The Committee recommendations
reportedly include removal of former President Obasanjo as
Chairman of the Board of Trustees, a review of the 2006
membership revalidation exercise which forced many from the
party, and removal of "executive dictates and control."
According to Kramer, Ali wants to reduce Obasanjo's power in
the party and felt if the convention were allowed to hold in
January, that Obasanjo would easily maintain his current
influence. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) In an November 27 conversation with Poloff, Agape
Kramer (strictly protect) said press reports that the PDP
National Convention, scheduled for January 5, 2008, was
postponed due to the December holidays or the desire of
National Chairman Ahmadu Ali and others to stay in office
were simply incorrect. Kramer claimed the real reason behind
the indefinite postponement is the desire of Ali and a few
others in the party leadership to implement the
recommendations of the Alex Ekwueme-led Reconciliation
Committee. Press reports indicate the Committee
recommendations include the removal of Obasanjo as Chairman
of the Board of Trustees, a review of the 2006 membership
revalidation exercise which forced many from the party, and
removal of "executive dictates and control." Kramer told
Poloff Ali's principle desire is to reduce Obasanjo's tight
hold of influence on the party. According to Kramer, Ali
recognized that January was too early to make the necessary
changes and ensure that Obasanjo is removed from the party's
power structure. Kramer believes the Convention will be
postponed into the more distant future -- beyond January or
February.

[1](#)3. (C) Kramer dismissed press reports that Ali and others who
were elected to positions of leadership in 2005 plan to sue
to maintain their positions for the full four years (rather
than only until the National Convention). She told Poloff
that Ali is "ready to move on" and has already "checked out"
of the day-to-day management of the party. Ali, she claimed,

is only staying on despite Senate confirmation of an Ambassadorial appointment, because he believes he is well-positioned to make positive changes in the party. (NOTE: Kramer even used the words "leaving a legacy of change for his children.") Kramer maintains Ali will not leave the party Chairmanship to assume his Ambassadorial post because new leadership would take too long to get up-to-speed and affect the change necessary.

14. (C) Kramer pointed out the significance of the timing of Ali's efforts. Because the Ward Congresses and State Congresses were originally planned for early December, many within the PDP leadership and even the professional staff have resigned to run for elected positions. This leaves a dearth in the PDP staff at all ranks and has allowed Ali and others who remain behind on the National Working Committee some breathing room to push their reform agenda. At present, with Ali out of the day-to-day operations and the numerous resignations, Kramer said she and a few other PDP staff remain behind to keep the lights on.

15. (C) COMMENT. That a large number of PDP members want Obasanjo out of politics all together is clear. Between the emergence of the Integrity Group in the House of Representatives and their goals for the PDP in the lead-up to the Convention (Ref B) and Kramer's assertion that the Convention was postponed to allow time to reform and reduce Obasanjo's influence, those opposed to Obasanjo appear to be in the majority and gaining strength. What is less clear, however, is whether the desire to remove Obasanjo's "executive dictates and control" will result in simply a change in which godfather networks are in charge, or a real movement to a more democratic party structure.

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16. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED. The potential weakness in Ali's alleged plan is that while the indefinite postponement of the Convention buys him time, it also buys time for Obasanjo to shore up his support. The one conclusion we can draw from the indefinite postponement is that no group (Ali, Obasanjo, or Integrity Group) feels they have the wherewithal to win control of the party leadership at this time. Otherwise, there would have been a significant opposition to the postponement. END COMMENT.
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